

1. Respect for the child
2. Respect for his rights.
3. Tolerance for his feelings.
4. Willingness to learn from his behaviour.
  - a. about the nature of the individual child.
  - b. about the child in the parents themselves.
  - c. about the nature of emotional life, which can be observed much more clearly in the child than in the adult because the child can experience his feelings much more intensely and, optimally, more undistinguished than an adult.

The way to remove the legacy of violence against children that exists within most adults today is to give freedom to our children to be themselves, free them from the warping pressures and demands of our industrial society (be it in the form of 'parenting', schooling, or the demands of the economy). and then allow ourselves to learn from children.

## 6

### Conclusion: Children and the Future

From the child's first days, he or she is typically condemned to a process of control and becomes progressively more comprehensive as the years pass. From potty-training, to denial of sexual feelings, via the industrial drudgery that is schooling, the child comes to learn that the priorities and demands of adults must take first place, and that it is right that this is so. But the adult world is not content with the mere control of the child's physical surroundings and behaviour, to child must submit to the moral and imaginative priorities of the adult's world as well. The taboo on personal sexuality that exists in most homes is only the most obvious sign of such control, but even the more pervasive demands of mass-consumption society are also present from the earliest years, demanding that the child sacrifice his or her own creative impulses and imagination to the crazes and trends of the current fashion. But the adult's world is also a world of coercion and conformity, both facts of our social subordination to the needs of mass-consumption. The pressures on parents, for example, to train their children to a strict routine of eating, sleeping, and playing to a timetable is partly the result of the economic and social pressures on the parents. Similarly, whatever individual school teachers may wish to do with their children they are hamstrung by the demands of curricula designed to serve the needs of the industrial economy, producing malleable workers willing to sacrifice basic freedom for small, usually monetary returns.

However, it is not just contemporary economic and social pressures that make adults willing oppressors of children, for learned patterns of behaviour play the greatest part in that oppression. Adults inherit child-rearing beliefs and techniques, and they often seek to avenge their own suffering as children on children that are now in their control. The sexually-abused child becomes the child abuser, the moralised child becomes the moraliser, the 'smacked' child becomes the 'smacker'.

Both children and adults suffer from the denial of the individuality of the child, from the denial of unconditional love for the child. Children suffer, their personalities by adults determined to impose their ways, and those children continue to suffer as adults, albeit with the outlet provided by their denial of children's rights. Children never learn the happiness and responsibility of freedom, and they rarely learn that love of freedom as adults, conditioned as they are from the earliest age to conform, to be moulded to the plans of others, and to mould others in their control.

If we are to achieve a society built upon love, upon free co-operation, free from authoritarian assumptions and constraints, then we must free the children. Return childhood to children, listen to children, respond to them, talk to them, ask them what they want and why, give them the space to be themselves, love them and learn freedom from them. That way the adult world will change too. Treating children with respect and love will mean abandoning the priorities of industrial society, of mass-consumption capitalism, and focusing instead on the freely arrived at priorities of each child, of each individual. A new way of treating children will prove to be the key to a new type of society, a new type of economy - something the world in the late twentieth century sorely needs.

## CHILDREN IN SOCIETY: A LIBERTARIAN CRITIQUE

Stephen Cullen.

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"In our society children are largely a silent group, whose needs and wants are entirely determined by adults. At every stage adults seek to mould children to the priorities of an alien, adult world. The baby must be trained to a 'routine', the child must be 'disciplined', a place must be found at nursery or crèche as soon as possible, it must be fed into eleven or more years of compulsory education. Protestations from the child are met with the over-riding power of the adult, based ultimately, and usually, on physical coercion. But there is also a justification, for not all adults are happy with the formula 'Because I tell you to', instead the child can be informed in his or her misery that 'It's for your own good'.

"Such an approach arises from a refusal to treat children as having equal status and rights as any adult. The essential difference between an adult and a child is one of time and experience, but beyond that there is no difference. Few adults would accept that a more experienced adult, for instance in educational terms, should be treated with substantially more respect than a less experienced adult, yet that view is the norm as far as children are concerned."

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## Introduction

'Death of a Rat' was a short film produced by students in Paris in 1968. In the film a chain of authoritarian relationships leads from a shop-floor worker being harassed by his boss to the death of a rat, with an abused wife, small boy and cat providing the link between the two events. Each link, human and animal, in the chain of oppression seeks an outlet to the frustration of powerlessness, and the only outlet available is to turn on those weaker than oneself. The worker bawls at his wife, who screams at the boy, who kicks the cat, who kills the rat.

As a fable of modern society 'Death of a Rat' told a familiar tale, one that is accepted by all sections of opinion in one way or another. The fears of the 'little man', and woman, are well known, and are frequently addressed by all manner of professional politicians and pressure group activists. There is always, or so it seems, someone on hand to speak for the oppressed, to organise them, and to give them some semblance, at least, of taking a degree of control over their own lives. Trades Unions, the Women's Movement, or The Animal Liberation Front, could have all provided some outlet for the unfortunate in 'Death of a Rat'. All, that is, except the small boy. Assuming that his parents didn't violently misuse the child, and that he went to school regularly, then the small boy would have found few allies in his particular struggle. His complaints would have, in all likelihood, been brushed off as childish whining, or he would have been told that's the way things are, part of growing up, or that his parents were only doing what was best for him, or the ultimate adult excuse, that 'it never did me any harm'.

In our society children are largely a silent group, whose needs and wants are entirely determined by adults. At every stage adults seek to mould children to the priorities of an alien, adult, world. The baby must be fed into eleven or more years of compulsory education. Protestations from the child are met with the over-riding power of the adult, based ultimately, and usually, on physical coercion. But there is also a justification, for not all adults are happy with the formula 'Because I tell you to', instead the child can be informed in his or her misery that 'It's for your own good'.

Such an approach arises from a refusal to treat children as having equal status and rights as any adult. The essential difference between an adult and a child is one of time and experience, but beyond that there is no difference. Few adults would accept that a less experienced adult in, for example educational terms, would be treated with substantially more respect than a less experienced adult.. yet that view is the norm as far as children are concerned. In consequence, children's lives are marked by a high degree of powerlessness. And, unlike the adult, the child has few opportunities to give full vent to his or her feelings or choose any opinion other than continued existence under the control of parents, teachers, or social workers. Kicking the cat just doesn't give the same release as action with your trade union, adherence to the Women's Movement, or any of the other outlets of the adult. However, the revenge of the child is near at hand, for the child is the father and the mother of the adult, and he or she will one day have children, and perhaps others, in their control.

It is the central argument of this booklet that our treatment of children is both an illustration and a symptom of our society. The constraints placed upon adults by our industrial society create tensions that confirm the systematic, and inherited, denial of childhood. That continued denial of the fundamental right of the child to be his or her self in turn aggravates the right of the child to be his or her self in turn aggravates the hierarchy of authority and oppression that characterises our lives in Britain in the late twentieth century. If we are to challenge the society in which we live and begin to build a more peaceful, happier, and healthier world, then we must begin at the foundations of society, with the baby, with the child.

own good/the good of my soul", "they did it because they loved me". Only those victims who become aware and, equally important, who receive unconditional love from another person, can transform their childhood trauma into a creativity which allows their repressed feelings to be expressed. Once these feelings have been experienced and expressed even the most damaged victims can break out of the strange hold of their past.

Sadly, for many victims of child abuse these two prerequisites for healing (becoming aware and receiving unconditional love) remain lacking all their lives. For them the only possible response to their troubled childhood is a destructive one. The alienation the child feels, but cannot express, from their inner, 'real', self is manifested through self-abuse and/or abuse of others. Recurring depression, many forms of psychiatric illness, alcohol dependency, drug abuse, self-mutilation, compulsively repeated disastrous relationships and, ultimately, suicide are all forms of self-destruction which proclaim a child within whose needs continue to be ignored, indeed, are no longer consciously felt. It is impossible for those damaged people to treat other vulnerable beings with any greater empathy than they can treat themselves-as-children. Thus the cycle of abuse continues to turn from generation to generation. However, this destructive response is usually only of concern to society if it is also turned against others. It is in this light that the statistic already quoted that 80% of the prison population were once children in care makes sense. The 'care' these, already damaged, victim children receive is perhaps most notoriously indicated by the use of 'pin-down' and the subsequent list issued by the Home Office outlawing the use of prolonged solitary confinement, deprivation of sleep, and deprivation of food as routine methods of controlling behaviour. Is it surprising that these tortured children grow up to take their revenge on society and end up in prison? Neither should it surprise us that children whose inner being was murdered by parents and who never received genuine love that would have allowed them to feel their pain become adults who have no ability to empathise with the pain of others and who can therefore commit crimes of violence without any sense of revulsion or any pity for their victim. Every murderer, every rapist, every violent criminal was born a helpless, dependent child, in the violence done to that child lies the root of the violence done by that adult.

Children need the freedom to be themselves, need the freedom to live without fear, and they need the unconditional love that is due to them from responsible adults. If the helpless baby can grow in a situation of security and complete understanding that he or she will grow to be an adult who is capable of giving such love to others, children and adults. It is clear that, contrary to the Christian dogma that still pervades our society, suffering does not make those who have suffered more loving, more understanding of suffering in others. This truth is apparent at the personal level, with those who are abused as children become the child abusers, at national level with whole peoples who have suffered visiting more suffering on others, who are as powerless as they once were, the Israelis' attitude to the Palestinians being an example of this. Suffering breeds nothing but more suffering, and the revenge of those who have suffered (usually carried out against the innocent) doesn't even have the merit of resolving the problem of the avenger.

Alice Miller, whose work in the field of child cruelty has done most to expose and explain the violence that is done to children, argues for a completely new approach to child care based on the recognition that children are individuals, with their own needs, emotions, and desires that must be respected. Further more, the respect that responsible adults must give to children must be provided in the context of unconditional love. The aim must be to allow the child to be free and to provide the security of love that the child needs. The two are inseparable. It is not possible to love the child if one is continually attempting to mould that child to some predetermined adult plan that represents the priorities of one's own adult world. This applies to those who would force the child to conform to liberal, radical, libertarian, or whatever sentiments that the adult might see as necessary for the child to imbibe. The attempt to enforce any adult scheme leads to the negation of the child's right to his or her own self. That is a fact that all well-meaning adults must learn. If you want freedom for children then you must be prepared to give that freedom to them, and allow them to make choices that you disapprove of. Those adults, usually of the best liberal types, who forbid their children from having toy guns, and playing at war, for example, are just as much the enemies of childhood freedom as the more obviously authoritarian parents. Children will learn from the freedom and understanding that they themselves experience as children to treat tomorrow's children in the same fashion. Adults should learn from children, who will learn the freedom from their earliest day.

In her book *For Your Own Good: The Roots Of Violence In Childhood*, Alice Miller presents a list of the needs of children that adults must act upon if a cycle of freedom is to be set up to replace the cycle of repression, cruelty and false love that now characterises both our treatment of children and, in consequence, our society as a whole:

# CHILDREN OF THE FUTURE



One statistic alone suffices to convey the vital importance of childhood, and that is the fact that 80% of the UK prison population were once children in care. The life of the child today is the life of the adult tomorrow, and today's children will form tomorrow's. The truth is that by denying the right of children to be themselves, by insisting on moulding them, restricting them, disciplining them at every turn, we are warping not only today's children, through them, future generations. At every stage of the child's life adults seek to use power to twist children to an adult's perception of the world. But that adult perception of children's needs is, in itself, substantially the product of the sufferings of those adults when they were children. Adults do unto children what was done to them. Adults continue to damage the lives of children for two main reasons:

1. adults are merely repeating patterns of child misuse that they themselves learnt as children,
2. adults often seek to find outlets for their own fears and frustrations by avenging themselves on the powerless, and there are few groups more uniformly dependent and powerless than children.

\* This chapter is, in essence, built upon the work of Alice Miller, whose books include: *The Drama of Being a Child*, (original, German, edition, 1979); *For Your Own Good*, (original, German, edition, 1980); *The Untouchable Key*, (original, German, edition 1988). All these are publications by Virago Press, as is her latest book, *Banished Knowledge: Facing Childhood Injuries*, Virago, London, 1990.

Thanks also to Mairi-Ann Cullen for her help with this chapter and other insights into the plight of the child in industrial society.

The child we once were remains within us all as adults: how we treat that child within largely determines our behaviour towards other vulnerable beings.

For all child victims of abuse, whether physical, mental or sexual, there are only two responses possible: Creative or destructive of others. Unfortunately, the creative response of adults to the abused child within themselves is only an option if at some point those persons have become aware of what was done to them and can fully accept that the child they were was the victim of cruelty perpetrated by responsible adults towards a powerless child. This becoming aware is the most difficult process for the abused person because it is the fundamental command of power-abusing parents or carers that the child should be forced to repress all sense of injustice and be made to accept that the cruelty they experienced is justified and so is not cruel but right. The justification used can be religious or social 'norms' or even family tradition; the effect is the same, namely, the child is warped by repression of genuine feelings of pain, anger, injustice, fear which leads to the child losing touch with any genuine feelings and so to a state of alienation from the inner self. In place of the true feelings of the child, fear of losing the love of the powerful adult takes over, with the result that the child, regardless of suffering inflicted by that adult, will go to any lengths to gain the approval of their tormentor. The process of becoming aware, of seeing the powerful adult as an abuser, as cruel, as responsible for one's suffering is devastating precisely because it forces the individual to realise that their suffering was in vain: the adult whose approval they so deeply craved was never worthy of their respect. Becoming aware forces a complete evaluation of one's past life with the uncovered truth of abuse acting as a searing light which burns away the chimeras to which the abused child so desperately clung - "I deserved it", "it was for my

It is not that long ago that the parents of new-born children were strongly advised to get their child into a strict routine. The child was to be woken at a set time, was to be played with at a set time, was to be fed and changed at the 'right' time, and was to be put asleep at a given time. All activity, not timetable was forbidden, and that extended to comforting the child when it was crying. This rigid regimen was designed to prevent the domination of the mother's life by her new baby, being dominated by the clock being presumably more acceptable than by a baby. Successful parents, 'good' parents, were those who succeeded in imposing such a programme on their child as soon as possible. Although there are few child experts who would recommend absolutely such an approach now, the legacy of childcare by timetable is strong. The three areas where it is most strong in popular notions of childcare are in crying, sleeping, and potty training. Few first time parents cannot have received the advice from others that a child can be left to cry, because it will soon learn that crying gets it nowhere. This advice is often tendered in connection with sleeping. To leave a child crying in its cot, where it has been placed with the injunction to 'go to sleep' is seen as being a normal tactic. Similarly, parents often go through great lengths to get their child out of nappies, and early success here is a much prized boast outside many nursery schools. As usual with a strategy that is essentially in the parents' interest, a child who is quickly potty trained is seen as being 'advanced', whilst one that is slow to come out of nappies is seen as being slow generally. Like all those in control of other's lives, the powerful seek to justify their own interests in terms of the well being of the powerless.

An example of this coercive approach to the baby and young child can be found in the writings of Dr. Christopher Green, consultant paediatrician and head of the Child Development Unit at the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children in Sydney, Australia. He is a frequent contributor to the *Australian Women's Weekly* and author of *Toddler Taming, A Parents Guide to Surviving the first four years*, a book which sold over 350,000 copies in Australia before being successfully published in Britain. Dealing with sleeping problems Dr. Green advocates letting the child cry for up to 10 minutes then comforting until the child has calmed down, then the child should be left alone; subsequent crying should be met by longer and longer periods of letting the child cry. If the child persists in crying for more than an hour then a sedative should be administered. Dr. Green's prescription for the child who refuses to go to bed is even more drastic. There are three options here:

1. sit with him in his room
2. give him a smack, or
3. use the patent rope trick.

Basically the parent is advised that if violence doesn't work, then the only remedy is to tie the child's bedroom door in a way that the child can open it a few inches but not enough for it to get out. Once again, the desires and motives of the parent are predominant, those of the child secondary and, if you follow the crying/sedation/violence/imprisonment options, of no consequence at all.

Dr. Miriam Stoppard, the extremely popular and prolific British writer on children is, fortunately, far more sympathetic to the child's position. However, even with this expert one finds the acceptance of violence as being a legitimate method to be employed in parenthood. Whilst warning about various limits in smacking, she nonetheless accepts the use of such violence. In *Your Baby*, Dr. Stoppard writes:

I feel that, provided that your normal relationship with your child is kind and loving, a quick smack at the time of the trouble, when you are still angry, will do little harm. This will have more immediate effect than lengthy explanation and the whole thing can be quickly dismissed.

One of the clearest indications of a societies view of children can be seen in this approach to violence. Society would forbid a private citizen from smacking another who angered him, yet it permits this when it is an adult smacking a child. Further, just what is a smacking (in other words, hitting, or striking) likely to be if 'you are still angry'? To compound the denial of rationality that violence is, we see that the parent should not feel the need of disciplining from its earliest days. The youngest children are seen



to be 'willful', 'domineering', 'demanding'. From the first, parental concern and love is tempered by a desire to control; indeed, many parents see the use of coercion as being evidence of their 'love' for their children. Needless to say, such love by coercion coincides very neatly with the needs of the parents. <sup>4</sup>

The Christian origins of this view are all too clear. Christian theology seeing children as being born in sin, as being wicked from the start, evidence of the presence of evil that dates back to the fall of man. In addition, the Christian God is seen as being a father who chastises his people in their own interests, and according to his own, unknowable, standards. The God of the Old Testament ordered Abraham to slaughter his son, Isaac, whilst the New Testament God went one better and had his son crucified. Christianity may have ceased to be a widespread religion in Britain, but its effects are still with us, as are the closely related doctrines of Islam and Judaism. The key inheritance here is that the child must be made to conform to the priorities of the parent, it is the child who is to blame for its needs that prove problematic for parents; whether those needs are the need for human comfort and companionship late at night, or the desire to try things for itself, even if it leads to drawing on the bedroom wall, or digging plants up in the garden.

Most parents accept without thought this view that the needs of the child are limited by those of the adult. But why should this be the case? The responsibility for creating the child lies solely with its parents, the child has no say in its emergence, or in the choice of parents. The child does not create its position of dependence.

A libertarian approach to freedom stresses that the individual must be given responsibility for his or her own life, that others cannot decide for the free individual. But there is another aspect to such freedom, the individual must take responsibility for his or her own actions. A society without government would not be a society without order, for in taking responsibility for one's own life one would be taking responsibility for one's part in human society. A free individual must take responsibility for his or her own actions, and not expect others to take that responsibility which is uniquely the individual's. Similarly, the proposition that the parent can continue to override the emotional, psychological and imaginative needs of the child is a false one. The child has the right to expect the parent to take responsibility for the creation, and, hence, the early years, of another life. Children have the right to expect unconditional love from their parents, not a programme of disciplining that will mould the child to the demands and priorities of the adult and, by extension, to those of industrial society. The parents exercised their free will to create the child, to have a family, the child has a right to expect the parents to accept their responsibility for their free actions. The burden, if there is such a thing, should be seen to rest not with the child, but the parents.

If Christianity provides an ideology for the oppression of the child, then social and economic conditions have always determined the ultimate fate of the child. Even before the industrial revolution transformed the face of Britain, to need to subsist determined the role of children. In agrarian Britain, children would be part of the economy from an early age, gleaming with the women at harvest time or, like the young William Cobbett, starting their working lives as cow scapers. Children shared in the hardships of their parents from an early age, but they also shared in the variety of the agricultural year too. The habit of child labour was carried over into the industrial age, and early government reforms aimed at reducing child labour in mining and manufacturing proved very unpopular with parents whose children represented a valuable source of income.

Today, the child of four doesn't go down the mine with his father to operate the traps, but he is still constrained, as is his father and mother, by the demands of the economy. Dr. Christopher Green has spent so much time devising sleep disciplining measures like the 'parent rope trick' because wakeful children mean tired parents when the alarm sounds to get parents ready for work. The reality is that the priorities of the parents that lead to so much coercion and violence used against children are not really the priorities of parents, but those of work. It might well be great fun, and a great way to bond with your child, to get up in the middle of the night for an hour playing toy cars, but you can't do it if you've to leave for the office at 8 in the morning. Similarly, the drive to get the child broken into the routine of nursery school has a lot to do with freeing both parents for work, or shopping trips to the supermarket, or doing the housework, although, once again, such a strategy is generally held to be in the child's best interests. In the eyes of the harassed mother, it's irrelevant if her two year old wants to stay in her pyjamas playing at home, or if she doesn't want to go to nursery today, or, not just yet. That's tough, the mother demands attendance now, the nursery demands it, the economic needs of the family and society demand it. The priorities of the parent are, in fact, the priorities of industrial society. Babies and young children are generally seen to be in need of 'disciplining', the aim being to make the child conform to the perceived needs of the parent. In pursuit of this goal most parents and experts see

more equipment is needed to undertake more and more leisure activities. I remember once talking to a man who had been an avid climber in the 1920s and early 1930s. At one point in our conversation about his hobby, he produced some photographs of himself and others climbing in the Lake District. Their equipment consisted of stout shoes, ropes, and felt hats. When I remarked on this, he grinned at me, and said that they wouldn't be allowed near a climb dressed like that today. Admittedly, climbers 60 and 70 years ago weren't tackling the climbs they do now, but just how much equipment does any such hobby or sport really need? Again, children's leisure time is as much under this sort of marketing pressure as adults'. The recent craze, once again a manufactured craze, for mountain bikes illustrates this. Children throughout the country desire nothing more than a 25-speed mountain bike, day-glo biking clothing, crash helmet, gloves and various other paraphernalia. The fact that few of them will ever take their mountain bike anywhere near a hill or mountain is irrelevant, what is important to the child is that he or she must have the right equipment to avoid the censure of peers.

A final example of the usurpation of children's sovereignty by mass-marketing occurs in the area of the individual child's imagination. A child's imagination is of little use to producers unless it can be channelled into areas that demand consumption. Television, film, and video stories that are aimed at children are deliberately designed so that the 'spin-off' markets will be as large as possible. The 'Mutant Turtle' case is a good illustration of this, with the hype for 'Mutant Turtles' long preceding their release in the UK. Having softened up the market, the UK release was accompanied by 'Mutant Turtle' products in every shape and form, from Turtle slippers and pyjamas to Turtle masks, daggers, and bodices to be worn when acting out imaginative games based upon the characters' adventures. Children dashing around in their Turtle outfits are still engaging their imaginations, but their imaginations - the most vital element of the child's individuality and autonomy - have been carefully circumscribed by the advertiser to maximise profits and, incidentally, minimise the growth of children's imagination.

Play has always been central to the autonomy of the child. The ability to freely create one's own world, in which one can act out child desires, fears, fantasies, and hopes is central to the development of individuality based on one's personal needs and desires. Play is still the area most free of adult intervention, yet the expansion of mass-marketing and changes in technology and the nature of industrial society have led to the erosion of this vital aspect of childhood. The child is no longer free to develop his or her own world, based on individual priorities. Instead, the search for profit has brought the world of mass-marketing into the child's life. Vast sums of money are spent on outlasting to children modes of behaviour, desires, and priorities the real origin of which lies in the economy of mass-consumption society. This pressure, reinforced by the norms of behaviour expressed by television, film, music, and press aimed at children, turns the child, at the earliest stage possible (the recent arrival of 'his' and 'hers' disposable nappies being an appalling example of this) into a consumer. This generates profit for the producer, but, perhaps more importantly, it helps condition the child to his or her role as an adult. Just as the typical experience of parents conditions the child to accept arbitrary authority, and schooling conditions him or her to accept boredom and a life regulated by the clock, so mass-marketing conditions the child to the habit of consumption. The mirroring between parents and the state, school and the workplace, and the latest children's 'craze' and life as a consumer couldn't be clearer. The subordination of childhood imagination has left many children with little autonomous life at all, and the loss of practically all their freedom mirrors the loss suffered by most adults in industrial society.





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'Milky Bar', 'Dairy Crunch', 'Aero', 'Kit-Kat', 'Mars Bar', 'Crunchie', 'Flake'. Advertising doesn't come cheap (£8,000 for a 30-second slot on Scottish Television in 1988, or £77,000 for a 60-second slot on Thames Television), but, if we assume that firms behave with logic in the market place, then it is clear that it must be seen as effective. Although in many cases such as the confectionery market, most advertising can be seen as defensive advertising that is undertaken to preserve market share, the overall effect of advertising in society (along with all the other aspects of marketing) is to create a cultural climate of mass-consumption. Because marketing and consumption prey on the need of children to create their own world, establish their own identity separate from home and school, children are potentially the most open to this enormous expenditure on image-creation.

This is recognised by the Advertising Standards Authority, whose guidance includes a section on advertising aimed at children, couched in the ambiguous language beloved of lawyers and the world over.

Direct appeals or exhortations to buy should not be made to children unless the product advertised is one likely to be of interest to them and one which they could reasonably be expected to afford themselves.

Advertisements should not encourage children to make themselves a nuisance to their parents, or anyone else, with the aim of persuading them to buy an advertised product.

No advertisement should cause children to believe that they will be inferior to other children, or unpopular with them, if they do not buy a particular product, or have it bought for them.

One might ask whether they really believe that advertising aimed at children conforms to such standards? What children's products aren't of interest to children? Who are children to pester with their desire to own advertised goods if not their parents? And, considering you can only get one person on a skate board, for instance, how enjoyable is your life going to be if all your friends have skate boards and you don't?

In the process of creating and exploiting markets, advertising also further extends the subordination of children's needs that characterises the experience of the child with regard to normal practices of 'parenting', schooling, and health. In many respects the exploitation of the adult and the child by mass marketing is similar, both 'target audiences' are presented with norms of behaviour and consumption that effectively delimit the lives of the majority of the population. The fear of taking individual action that is contrary to the norms of one's age group, sex, or class that most people learn from an early age, is magnified and exploited by mass-marketing. Consequently, individual initiative is much lower than it otherwise would be without the ever-present manipulation of mass-marketing. One aspect of this process is particularly acute with regard to children, that is in respect of children's imaginations.

Children were once the repositories of folk-memory in the form of the vast number of traditional games that they played, games that had been handed down from generation to generation by children, many games being amended by them on the way. Alice B. Gomme, a pioneer collector of such traditional games in the 1890s, argued that it "was not too much to say that we have in these children's games some of the oldest historical documents belonging to our race, worthy of being placed side-by-side with the folk tale...". The modern edition of Gomme's *The Traditional Games of England, Scotland, and Ireland* runs to over 500 pages of children's games. Needless to say, in the age of mass-consumption most of these games are lost to children. This is not just a loss for the largely unwritten history of the peoples of the British Isles, but it is also a sign of the loss of autonomy suffered by children. The important aspect of such traditional games was that they represented a world entirely untouched by adults. The games sprung from the child's view of the world, be it entirely of the imagination, or the child's view of adult practices and institutions. Adult interference did not alter or change the development of the games, rather this process was entirely accomplished by the anonymous mass of playing children acting on their own initiative over the centuries. Similarly, it wasn't adult endeavour that preserved the games, and ensured their survival, but the children handing their knowledge on from one generation of children to the next. Traditional games represented the free world of children, the autonomous life of childhood play. The subversion of that tradition by various aspects of the mass-consumer society, television and marketing being to the fore, has destroyed the one area of the child's life that was truly autonomous.

Just as industrial society controls a large segment of the individual's life through the institution of waged labour, so it has sought to dominate the individual's free time by the organisation of leisure. As the worker in the most economically developed countries gradually gains more time spent outside the factory and office, so mass-consumption capitalism seeks to expand market opportunities into areas that had previously been relatively free from the demands of consumption. Increasingly, more and

the use of violence and coercion as being perfectly acceptable; although few of them would accept such a strategy being applied to private adults by other private citizens. The child is seen as being equally, or more than equally, responsible for the conditions of the adult world, although the entire responsibility for the existence of the child lies with adults; the child is innocent. The parent sees the child as being subject to the parent's priorities, which override important emotional, psychological, and imaginative needs in demands of industrial society; the priorities of the parent that encourage such coercive treatment of the child are, in reality, the priorities of the system. The system is not orientated to the needs of the family group, and, in consequence, the needs of the child are not paramount.

## 2

### Children and School

One of the perennial political issues is education. The 1980's and early 1990's have seen the Conservative government introduce a series of initiatives supposedly aimed at improving the standards of Britain's schools: City Technology Collages, Opting Out, new sixteen-plus examinations, the National Curriculum, testing, not to mention the ending of teachers' pay bargaining rights, and moves towards central funding. The success of these measures, even in the government's eyes, has been questionable. City Technology Collages have resolutely refused to spring up the inner cities, and private business has kept its usual distance from education, preferring state intervention in this area, as in many others. The introduction of the GCSE in England and Wales, and standard grade in Scotland, along with the requirements of the National Curriculum have added extra burdens for teachers. The increase in workloads, and the steady decline in the relative worth of teachers' salaries have helped to demoralise teachers, and reduce the supply of potential teachers. Predictably, the Labour Party has seized on all these problems and recently promised that should it win the next election then a Labour government will "make Britain the best educated country in Europe". However, they don't promise to change the nature of British schooling, just the quantity. Indeed, the Labour Party have, for example, supported the idea of the National Curriculum, proposing to strengthen its application, even into the previously free area of home education.

If the two main political parties differ over the details and quantity of schooling in Britain, they do not differ over their analysis of the role and purpose of education. Both Labour and Conservative are concerned that Britain's relatively poor industrial performance compared with her main rivals stems from poor educational provision. Great play was made by the government when in 1990, for the first time, the stay-on rate in British schools rose to over 50%. This, we are told, was evidence that Britain was beginning to get nearer to the very high stay-on rates to countries like Germany. Japan, too, is seen as a commercial rival whose educational practices may well have some relevance for Britain's schools. In May, 1991, the Education Secretary, Kenneth Clarke, made a fact finding visit to Japan, to see if their 'success' in the class-room offered pointers for Mr. Clarke's own reforms; that visit came in the wake of an earlier visit to Japan by Mrs. Thatcher, during while she lavished praise on the education system there. The message of both political parties to Britain is clear: if we wish to compare then we must insure our schools give the necessary training for tomorrow's workers.

This obsession with the relationship between national economic efficiency and schooling is nothing new. In fact, it lies at the heart of the modern schooling experience. Just as the shocking health of recruits for the Boer War led subsequent governments to upgrade health provision in Britain, so did fears about economic rivalry (with Germany being the main concern in the late nineteenth century, as now) propel government into rationalising and standardising elementary education on a nationwide scale, starting with the Elementary Education Act of 1870. Prior to this, educational provision had been a minefield of competing religious requirements, as dissenters and the established churches struggled to get state support for their differing conceptions of education; their struggle being one of religious rather than economic rivalry. But temporal matters triumphed, and became the dominant theme; in the words of the historian E.J. Feuchtwanger:

Alarm about the loss of industrial and technological leadership, which formed so persistent a theme for the next half-century, was just beginning to be heard [in the 1860's] and educational deficiencies in comparison with other countries were among the shortcomings receiving attention.



The obsession with the link between education and economic efficiency was also a dominant theme with those on the Left. Fabians, like Sydney and Beatrice Webb, and H.G. Wells, saw 'Efficiency' as being the main criterion by which education should be judged and measured.

There was, and is, another aspect of education that taxes the minds of governments, and those who would form governments, or direct educational policy. Schools are seen as the most effective form of inculcating dominant values in tomorrow's citizens. This is not just a facet of schooling and youth policy in countries like Hitler's Germany, or those modelled on the Soviet system. It is a principle concern of practically all schooling. The Education Act of 1870 received a generally warm welcome because it filled "the gap in the education of the children of what were sometimes called 'the dangerous classes'". Ideological indoctrination, along with preparation for the workplace, is a prime function of schooling. Even libertarian ventures have suffered in this respect, with the hey-day of libertarian schooling in Spain seeing conflicting views between those who wished to use schools as vehicles for political 'education' and those 'neutralists', like Ricardo Mella and Eleuterio Quintanilla, who wished to leave children free to "choose their religion, or irreligion or social doctrine, freely, as they saw fit".

Interestingly, those education systems that have been much admired by the British protagonists of economic efficiency are often the same systems that produce the most unquestioning pupils. Japan's schools are a good case in point here, based, as they are, on those provided by Prussia in the last century. British politicians would be delighted to take credit for the sort of academic 'success' that characterises the Japanese education system. And no doubt they would be quite happy with the price that the pupils pay. Whilst admiring that the Japanese system produced results, one expert from Tokyo commented that "You have a tremendous amount of conformity. That's the price you pay".

It is noticeable that in the everlasting 'education debate' the needs of society, business, trade, electorates, and parents are often addressed, but one group is consistently ignored: the pupils.

Given the strategic designs behind educational provision, it is hardly surprising that for the majority of children formal education is not a 'leading out', but in A.S. Neil's phrase, a 'ramming in'. But that 'ramming in' has its use in that it prepares the majority of children for a boring, limited, restricted life, devoid of real choice, by giving them exactly the same sort of education. There is no other way we can explain why society is happy for schools to take so long to explain so little. Eleven or thirteen years is a long time to spend doing anything, especially for five days a week, especially for about 38 weeks a year. A few years ago National Union of Teachers car stickers read "If you can read this thank a teacher". In view of the incredible number of people who are functionally illiterate in Britain perhaps it should have said, "If you can't read this ask a teacher what he/she did with 2,090 days of your life".

The school day starts at 9 o'clock and generally finishes around 4 o'clock. Seven hours. However, if you discount the time it takes shuffling between classes, waiting for the teacher to establish 'order' in the class, waiting for him or her to get the lesson going, listening to instructions, notices, and all the other impediments of school routine, you'll find that a good deal of the school day is functionally wasted - and that's before making any allowance for the waste that constitutes much of the lessons themselves.

The life of school routine is, however, one area in which schooling is successful. The pre-school child will, if left to his or her devices and not trained into a routine as advised by the 'parenting' books, eat when he or she feels like it, sleep when he or she feels like it, ask to be read a story when he or she feels like it, play when he or she feels like it. The finished product of the school system will work when he or she is told to, will eat at lunch time, will take his or her leisure time when allowed. The pupil is primarily passive, he or she can sit out the boredom of the lesson because they know that in another 40 minutes they will be free, either for five minutes between classes, or for another evening. The pupil is willing to knuckle under the boredom because he or she knows that it's a proven way of earning more when he or she leaves school. His or her job may also prove to be mind-bendingly tedious, but they will be able to stick it out, because they've had thirteen years of 9 to 4 routine. That's the success of the schooling system - it prepares people, in the most basic but vital way, to enter the economic system. Thirteen years standing up and sitting down at command is the best education you can get for half a century of clocking on and off. Thirteen years of holding out until break-time, Friday afternoon, and the holidays isn't far removed from the life of the single-skill workers in the industrial system. Interestingly, teachers are trained not to leave their charges alone for a minute. 'Make sure you're in the classroom before they are'. Why? Because like the industrial worker when he or she is off the hook, pupils tend to run amok in an attempt to let out long repressed frustrations arising from their lack of control over basic freedom. Once again, the role of policeman is mirrored by that of the teacher. Pity them, they both carry the can for the tensions of modern servitude.

by, of all bodies, the National Farmers' Union. In response to the demands of the big food retailers for fruit and vegetables that conform to a perfect standard of uniformity of shape and colour (something that depends very much on chemical technology), the NFU argued that it was the supermarket chains themselves that wanted this, not the public. As far as the fall in sweet sales following the removal of chemical additives is concerned one might be tempted to say that what children were missing were the addictive effects of the chemicals, not any preference for chemical colourings and sweeteners. But, once again, the demands of the economic system are to the fore, and in the words of the secretary of the Hyperactive Children's Support Group, "we are not winning the battle for the removal from food, confectionery and medicines of the artificial additives involved with hyperactivity and other health problems."

Reviewing the three child health issues of suicide, children in care, and additives in children's food, it is clear, once again, that the operation of industrial society mitigates against the realisation of children's rights. The problems of children's health in these areas are exacerbated by their subordination in the spheres of the family home, and school. The failure to allow children to develop their own priorities and determine their own needs free from the constraints and pressures of, for example, mass-marketing, the demands of the retail clothing, cosmetic and leisure industry's, or the food and confectionery industries is a danger to the health, and in some cases, the lives of many children.

## Children and Markets

4

The mass-consumption society operates on children on two levels, via adults with whom they come in daily contact, and, increasingly in a direct fashion through all the various forms of advertising that come under the heading 'marketing'. Advertising directed at children is perhaps far more effective at inculcating the values of mass-consumption than are parents and teachers, because such advertising aims at creating the sense of a children's and youth sub-culture that specifically excludes adults, and therefore avoids the anti-adult antagonism that flaws the immediate transfer of values between, for example, teachers and children. Although children learn patterns of behaviour, such as the role of punishment and the importance of peer group approval for one's behaviour, from parents and teachers, their desire to strike out on their own means that they wish to take their cultural values from sources untainted by familiar and authoritarian figures. Furthermore, consumer capitalism has shown itself to be adept at capturing genuine youth sub-cultures. The most striking examples of this was the capture of the punk movement in the 1970s by the big record companies and all the various branches of the 'music business'. Ironically, it is possible to trace elements of the situationists' struggle against the spectator society in the birth of punk, but, once again, consumer capitalism outmanoeuvred the rebels and proved to be the midwife of the bastard child of the situationists.

The creation of children's and youth markets give those groups the illusion of autonomy from adult society and control. In this sense, children and young people are, for the only time, accepted as being individuals in their own right, not merely subjects of the education system or parents. The mass-consumer society is willing to treat children as 'mini-adults' simply because they represent both current and future purchasing power. But, like adults, the 'rights' of the individual child as consumer are limited to making choices in the market place that are predetermined by the strategic planners of the boardroom and the advertising agency.

The identification and creation of markets is big business, absorbing vast amounts of resources with the primary end of selling goods and services that are often next to worthless. Interestingly, the companies that spend most on advertising are usually those that operate in oligopolistic markets where real competition (that is price competition) is limited. In those markets, advertising presents the only form of competition that can better be described as friendly or tolerant rivalry between the equally powerful gangsters of the market place. A good example of this near useless advertising is provided by British Telecom, which despite the presence of Mercury, is still a near monopoly. But that doesn't stop BT, who spent £29,986,000 on advertising in 1987, making it the seventh largest advertiser in the UK. Other big spenders in oligopolistic markets concerned with children, are Nestle, Rowntree Mackintosh (now owned by Nestle), Mars Confectionery, and Cadbury, the 3rd, 12th, 13th and 16th biggest advertisers in the UK in 1987, spending a combined total of £93,775,000 on advertising products like



infamous Common Agricultural Policy of the European Community is a network of political, farming, and chemical interests, where the consumer has little or no say. Farmers are pressurised by the very system of agricultural support that they depend on. They often operate on large overdrafts, which they look in order to increase their capitalisation, so that they might obtain bigger yields and take advantage of bigger subsidies to pay bigger and bigger interest charges. And they are also at the mercy of the large retailers (3 of whom will soon represent 75% of the retail food market in the UK), who demand ever-higher standards of marketability in the food that they sell. Farmers may wish that they had never climbed onto that nightmare treadmill, or, rather that they'd never been driven and coaxed onto it by governments, the EEC, banks and the chemical companies. But the lesson that the farmer has learnt is that food is big business, and that producers' and consumers' interests are secondary to the demands of profit and market share. For the consumer this means that he or she is often at the receiving end of a giant and sometimes poisonous food fraud. Food processing makes our food not what it seems to be, and additives are just one part of the story, but a part that affects children particularly.

The typical British adult consumes about 150 different additives in a day, many of which have only been partly tested, or not tested at all, and few of which have been tested in the sort of cocktail that the consumer is forced to endure. The majority of people are, apparently, unaffected by the chemical and natural additives their absorb along with their tea, bread, jam, beefburgers, and deserts, but in one group the effects of additives are more noticeable and have been more carefully studied - children. And, once more, children face even greater risk from the operation of the economy than do adults:

Children are particularly vulnerable to harmful additives, and yet they tend to be precisely the people who consume them in high quantities. White bread, jam and children's foods such as fish fingers tend to be high in additives. Moreover, children consume large doses of chemicals from snacks, soft drinks and fun foods. Some of the damage done has already come to light in medical studies. The long-term effects are unknown. Children are being made the guinea pigs for a huge experiment whose results may only be discovered when it is too late.

The argument over additives in foods rages, with food industry backed research attempting to prove that additives are harmless and necessary, the government covering its deliberations with the Official Secrets Act (these are 'trade secrets' we are talking about), and concerned groups arguing the opposite. Continued pressure on the government has forced it to ban a number of antioxidants, preservatives, sweeteners, and other additives from food specially prepared for babies and small children, but the ban does not cover other processed food. Interestingly, Britain has the worst record in western Europe in this area, prompting one Norwegian cabinet minister to say that she couldn't understand why it was that the British hated their children so much.

One group that deals directly with the effects of food additives on children is the Hyperactive Children's Support Group, based in Littlehampton, who have helped over 150,000 families whose children suffer from allergic reactions to natural and chemical additives. Following the pioneering work of the Californian allergy specialist, Dr. Ben Feingold, in the 1970's, it has become widely accepted that many allergic and behavioural problems in children are a result of exposure to, and ingestion of chemicals. This doesn't just cover food additives, but they constitute a major cause of such problems. Dr. Feingold showed that disorders like eczema, asthma, hives, skin rashes, itchings, and hyperactivity were often responses to food additives. The incidence of many of these problems is, interestingly, on the increase in the industrialised world. Asthma for example, is one of the few diseases that has continued to increase in the West, despite wider awareness of the problems and better treatment. More than two million Britons suffer from asthma, and it is a problem that is particularly associated with children. Furthermore, it is a killer, with over two thousand people a year dying from asthma attacks.

Hyperactivity in children is distressing for the victim and for his or her parents. Disrupted behaviour patterns, 'highs' and 'lows', violent behaviour, sleeplessness are all associated with hyperactivity caused by allergic reactions to food additives. However, the food industry refuses to acknowledge the connection, claiming that if there is a problem then it only affects a minority, and that often the problem is really that parents cannot accept that their child has psychological problems. Yet, the food manufacturers can be forced to change their position, even if only temporarily. When concern first broke over the use of additives in sweets, several manufacturers removed the offending chemicals from their products. However, they found that their sales dropped, and within a few years the chemicals were back in the sweets, but with the 'E' numbering system discontinued in favour of the chemical name. The industry is very resistant to pressure to change, and the government protects the industry's right to its trade secrets. As usual, the food industry claims that we, the consumers, are calling the shots, that it is by popular demands that the additives are in the food we eat. The truth of this was challenged recently

Even those teachers who enter the 'profession' with a desire to 'lead out' quickly realise the limitations on teaching initiative. The schooling system represents a number of constraints that are impossible to overcome. One is the pupil/teacher ratio. A good ratio is often seen to be about 20 pupils to one teacher, and at 16-18 year-old level a teacher would be happy with about 7 to 1. But faced with 40 pupils for 40 minutes the teacher is forced to teach the class on a general level. The twenty children become, in fact, one pupil, an amalgam of the needs of the pupils as perceived by the teacher.

The teacher also learns that the curriculum is a ferocious taskmaster. The teacher may want to talk with the pupils about anything but the next topic on the syllabus, but he or she has only got a certain amount of time to get through the course. The teacher has to teach the course - accepting the system means that you accept the expectations of schools, parents, and (given the job-allocation system) the pupils. Most public examination courses last for two years. Two years of head bashing, and a few months of crammed revision. By sweating blood pupils can perform well in an examination - and the next day happily forget every single thing they wrote in their examination.

Why don't children remember more from the eternal classes they've sat through? Because they aren't interested. They don't ask the questions, the initiative to find out doesn't come from them. The teacher is the fount of all knowledge, he or she asks the questions to which he or she has decided the answers. Compare this with the attitude of the pre-school, pre-nursery school child. Such a child wants to know, they ask questions they generate the interest, that interest comes from within, it is not forced on them from without. Education in schools is, to a large extent, of the 'stick-on' variety. The teacher ensures that enough material is stuck on for the short period of time required by the examination board, the next day the glue dries out, and that which was so painfully attached to the pupil drops off.

Schooling is a painful process, the most successful part of which is the preparation of children for their roles in the economy and society. The preoccupation of politicians and experts have, for the most part, remained unchanged since the 1860s. Schooling should improve the economic efficiency of the country, and it should inculcate the dominant ideology in future citizens. This is not a secret, just listen to the politicians. Even those educational reformers operating within the schooling system have usually sought to inculcate their own ideas. Such a desire is a difficult one for people elevated to the position of teachers or educationalists to resist. Even the great school libertarian, A.S. Neill, wasn't proof against such attitudes, his biographer reporting the Neill's attitude to book-learning meant that the library at Summerhill was a shambles, and that Neill was known to have pulled books from the hands of pupils, shouting "Go and Do something!"

For the Libertarians, the problem with the schooling of children is that it denies the integrity of the individual. Once again, the child is treated as being less than an adult. The child is seen as something that needs to be processed, to be bent to the disciplines, the restrictions, the preconceptions of school. The child must, in the analysis of the school, be acted on from without; initiative may have a place, but only in a strictly limited fashion, within terms set by the 'educator', the 'teacher', the adult, who 'knows best'.

The freedom of the child to be his or her self, to choose when he or she will learn, or play, to decide what it is that is of interest, to choose questions that he or she will ask, these are basic issues that schooling avoids. This is because schooling cannot address these issues in an unconditional fashion. If education is tied to the operation of the industrial economy, the priorities of industrial society, then it has no real choice but to continue in the present way. In that sense, the Japanese are right to have a schooling system that stresses conformity, technical and scientific training - a system that produces 'unquestioning docility' amongst obedient and inarticulate pupils. And Kenneth Clarke was right to go and study such a system, because his primary concern is advancing the needs of industrial capitalism, not the needs of children as determined by themselves on an individual basis.

The demands of society and the economy mean that we suppress the needs, desires and imagination of children in order to produce cogs for the great machine, although the quality of these cogs is a constant worry for the operators of the great machine. For the child the cost of this process is that he or she first loses the freedom to choose when and where it will go, and at what time. You are at school, therefore you will conform to the school timetable, it's just tough if you like going to bed late and getting up late, school says no to such anti-school, anti-social practices. Similarly, you must pee before class starts. And you must not sleep in the afternoon. And you must not want to see your parents before 3.15, even if you are only six. Also, you must not learn to read before you come to school; anyway, what right have parents to tell you how to do such a thing, you never know what harm such amateurs are doing. After school has trained the child to the timetable, it will destroy the child's innate interest in the world around it. This must be one of the great crimes of the school system.



Instead of being a huge resource from which the child can pick and choose, hunting in a natural, haphazard, but rewarding and memorable way for information about the world and imagination, the child is smothered under a uniform curriculum. As a result, the child comes to see learning as a restrictive process characterised by compulsion. The child's response is to escape from the world of learning, of understanding, of feeding the imagination. Educational 'success', when it happens, is usually the response of the child faced with the prospect of the labour market. Qualifications usually have very little relationship to the 'leading out' process that was the classical goal of education.

Schooling is determined by the needs of industrial society, not by the desire to encourage the expression of individual needs, or facilitate the myriad questionings of each individual child. Children are acted upon in schools, they are not the primary instigators of the educational process. As a result, schooling is a long, miserable, and largely unsuccessful process. Whatever teachers may wish, they are stuck in a system that has rigid boundaries: reform is difficult, and teachers are often left with the sordid task of acting as societies policemen, trying to control the frustrations of pupils deprived of the freedom to choose. But the situation is unlikely to change. Certainly change will not come from the top, because to free the school child would presuppose that the priorities of society itself had changed.

## Children and Health

In health, as in most other areas of their lives, children are dependent upon the time and care that adults take over enable children to lead healthy lives. The issue of children's health is, perhaps, more complex than any other area of their lives. Issues such as abortion, genetic engineering, childbirth techniques, infant mortality, provision of maternity leave, breast-feeding or bottle feeding, whether child care should be provided by employers, child minders, or within families; the closure of paediatric units, and the whole problem of caring for children in hospitals; pressure for formal pre-school education; and playground provision in a nation where most children still play in the street, are just a few of the issues that affect the health of children. As in the case of schooling and 'parenting', children's health is often characterised by their powerlessness, rising from the failure of adults to pay sufficient attention to their needs. The emotional strain of childhood under attack by the standards, and pressures of our mass-consumer society is one of the main causes of suicide among children and young people. The fears and needs of such people are often played down or ignored by adults who are themselves enslaved by society's demands. Children are also the targets of specific attacks on their health, the food industry in particular targeting children with confectionery and fast foods, the safety of which has been challenged in recent years by pressure groups operating outside the food industry/government nexus. A final example of the endangered health of children comes in the current concern over the nature of child care methods employed by local government agencies. Those issues, child suicide, unsafe food aimed specifically at children, and children in care, are only three of the many child health issues, but they serve to illustrate the general thesis that in Britain today the child is powerless.

The suicide rate of children and young people rose significantly in the 1980's, and shows little sign of falling. One in twenty girls and young women between the ages of 15 and 25 attempt suicide at some time. Of these, one in ten are successful in their attempt. Emotional pressures are still the most common reason for the suicides and suicide attempts of girls and young women. The fear that they are unloved, and will remain unloved is often a key element, and they are increasingly being joined by boys and young men in this respect. A new trend in the suicide rates has been established with regard to young male suicides, up by 53% in the period 1979-1989. It appears that boys and young men are suffering from the same emotional stresses that have long afflicted their female counterparts. Both groups are bombarded by the advertising, marketing, and retailing interests, who seek to create images of youth that will increase the profits of the fashion, cosmetics, and sports retailers and producers. Once, it was primarily girls who were convinced by these economic interests that unless they wore the latest cloths, sported the latest fashion accessories, had the latest hair style and make-up, and, absurdly, had the latest style of body, then they would remain undesired, unwanted, and unloved. Now, with the market and profit orientated logic of mass-consumption capitalism, boys too are the targets of such image-making. The 1980's saw the increased 'glamorisation of the male body', the 'Rambo' role model came to predominate. And boys found that they too had to be like the latest model of young manhood or they would be unwanted, unloved.

The commercial pressures on children and young people are not, of course, the only pressures that lead to suicide, suicide attempts, disorders like anorexia, and depression. But the prevalence of such commercial exploitation is symptomatic of adult attitudes to childhood concerns, fears, and needs. It is capitalism's desperate need to find more and more outlets for its products, the need to constantly chase profits, pay interest rates that change at the will of governments and bankers, and capture markets on the basis of brand-name loyalty and inhibit obsolescence that forces producers and retailers to increase the pressure on children. Children are victims of the fashion war because of the needs of the industrial system; they are not the only victims, but they are easy targets and easy victims for the adult economy. They are such easy prey because of other factors in their lives. Frequently a child finds that parental love is conditional, conditional on the child fitting in with the demands of the adult life, demands that are often as burdensome to the adult as to the child. Because of the conditionality of much parental love, children are in a weaker emotional position than most adults (or, have not yet learnt, as most adults have, that emotional fears must be buried in the face of society), and are, consequently, more prone to the fear of being different from, and unacceptable to, their peer groups. It is just that fear that the advertisers prey upon. Similarly, the child's experience of schooling ill-equips him or her to fight off the challenge of mass marketing, to have the confidence in his or her own personal desires and standpoint to say, "No, this image of youth has nothing to do with me. I will go my way". Schooling does not value independence, it values conformity.

School, of course, is another primary stress upon many children. Bullying and the pressure to perform well in examinations are both significant causes of health problems in children, leading all the way from bed-wetting, to suicide, via 'school refusal', a condition that is often treated by local education authorities in a manner that victimises the victim. There are no reliable figures on the incidence of bullying in schools, but the various estimates that have been made indicate that the experience of being bullied at school is a majority experience, and that up to 70% of all school children may have been bullied at some time in their school careers. Often the response of parents and teachers alike is to minimise the problem, believing that the victims of bullying are over-exaggerating the case, or that it's just one of those things that happen. There is rarely the recognition that bullying may be a symptom of the very institution of school itself, with arbitrary authority being invested in teachers, prefects, and in the mirror of the playground, in the bully.

If children in the normal environments of home, school and the market place often face pressures that many find difficult to cope with, then how much more painful are the lives of those children who are taken into government 'care', or custody. The last few years have seen a succession of scandals connected with this aspect of childhood. The best known cases have been the suicides of innocent young prisoners at the Risley Remand Centre, the Staffordshire 'pindown' torture case, and the cases of the Rochdale and Orkney children seized by zealous social workers. All these cases highlight different aspects of the problems of childhood, but each reveals how little regard is given to the rights of children.

The tragedy of many children taken into care is that it need not happen if society as a whole took a clearer stance on recognising children as being people who need the same care, love and attention as adults want for themselves. But what many adults learnt from their own parents and schooling was that their needs as children were of less importance than those of adults and the demands of the adult world. The cycle of child neglect and child abuse creating future generations of child neglecters and abusers is a well-established phenomenon. In particular, child sex offenders were themselves often the victims of sexual abuse when they were children. And it is not just in the area of sexual abuse that childhood experiences create the norms of child care for future generations. The tendency is prevalent in all aspects of parenting, the tendency to minimise the fears and needs of the child, to look down upon the child's world, just because it isn't the adult world. Children are dismissed, they are quietened, they aren't listened to. If adults began to accept that a child has equal status to an adult then these things might be different. In the words of one homeless 17 year old whose mother put him in care when he was 12:

My advice to people who can't handle their kids is that they should try and sit down and talk not just stick their kids in care, find out why they are doing it. I was only doing it because my dad got killed and it really upset me, really, really upset me.

One aspect of encouraging 'Green' issues from the cultural underground where they long languished is the issue of additives in food. The food industry is big business, very big business. At all stages of food production, processing, and retailing we have moved into the era of oligarchy domination. The